

1965

A study of the effects of a positive approach to the teaching of reading to reluctant readers.

Marguerite Bumpus
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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A Study of the Effects of a Positive
Approach to the Teaching of Reading
To Reluctant Readers

by

Marguerite Bumpus

A problem submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Education Degree
School of Education
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts
1965

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
 Chapter	
I--STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM....	1
Introduction.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Definition and Delineation of the Problem...	6
Definition of Terms.....	7
 II--RELATED RESEARCH.....	 11
Personality Patterns.....	12
The Self-Concept as is Related to Learning..	13
Motivation.....	15
Goal Setting.....	20
Related Literature.....	21
Summary of Related Research.....	22
 III--PROCEDURES.....	 24
History of the Subjects.....	25
Selection of Tests.....	30
Selection of Materials.....	30
Methods Used in the Development of Positive Self-Concepts.....	 31
Methods Used in Creating a Desire for Suc- cess.....	 32
Methods Used in Providing a Backlog of Suc- cesses.....	 32
Methods Used in Providing Goals.....	33
 IV--ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.....	 35
Comparison of Results of Reading Achieve- ment Tests Before and After the Study.....	 36
Comparison of Diagnostic Pre-tests and Diag- nostic Post-tests.....	 45
Comparison of the Results of Direct and Pro- jective Sentence Completion Tests.....	 45
Changes in Self-Concepts.....	46
Results of Bibliotherapy.....	46
Changes in Attitudes Toward Reading.....	47
Other Observable Changes.....	48

Chapter	Page
V--SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	50
Restatement of the Problem.....	51
Conclusions.....	51
Suggestions for Future Research.....	53
APPENDIX.....	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	70

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Gains Made in Addition by 4th and 6th Grade Pupils Under Different Incentive Conditions	17
2. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Boy #1.....	37
3. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Boy #1...	37
4. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Boy #2.....	38
5. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Boy #2...	38
6. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Boy #3.....	39
7. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Boy #3....	39
8. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Boy #4.....	40
9. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Boy #4...	40
10. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Boy #5.....	41
11. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Boy #5...	41
12. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Boy #6.....	42

Table	Page
13. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Boy #6...	42
14. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Girl #1.....	43
15. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Girl #1..	43
16. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests for Girl #2.....	44
17. Gains in Reading Achievement According to the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for Girl #2..	44
18. Comparison Between Pre-test and Post-test Reading Achievement Scores and Levels of Ex- pectancy.....	65

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

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STATEMENT AND DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

Success is an elusive term. Its definition is dependent not only upon the individual's concept of it in terms of himself, but also upon the opinions of others. Success in the eyes of one person may be deemed failure by another. Webster defines success as "...a favorable or satisfactory outcome or result."¹ From a teaching standpoint, this definition seems to suffice.

Why is it that some people succeed in so many of their undertakings while others continue to experience failure? This is a question which teachers would like to have answered, for in the classroom it can readily be observed that some children regularly meet with success, while others, even those of comparable I.Q.'s, fail just as consistently. Is it possible that successful students share common characteristics? If they do, what are these traits, and could a teacher use such information in adapting her teaching methods to encourage and promote success? The writer believes that such characteristics do exist. Therefore,

¹. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, (The World Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York, 1951), Volume II, p.1450.

this study will review these factors and suggest applications of this information to the teaching of reading to reluctant readers.

The following four factors are suggested by the writer as being shared by successful students:

- (1) They have a positive self-concept; that is, they believe in themselves and their own capabilities.
- (2) They have a strong desire to succeed.
- (3) They have a healthy backlog of successes to sustain them through inevitable failures.
- (4) These people seem to know where they are going; they are more likely to have goals.

The reluctant reader lacks these characteristics. His concept of himself is a negative one. According to Combs:

If the child has great reading problems, and he experiences little success in reading, his concept of himself will be that of a "non-reader". ...Since the conception he has of himself in reading is a negative one, he fails to make the progress necessary for him to experience success and improvement.²

Desire for success on the part of the reluctant reader is often non-existent. Consistent failures have produced a complacency that borders on complete resignation. How

². Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, Yearbook, (1962), p.25.

much easier it is to fail especially since everyone expects failure from him anyway ! This situation may have been created inadvertently by concerned parents, well-meaning friends and sometimes even teachers; for seldom, if ever, does a child enter school expecting to fail. On the contrary, he usually comes fired with enthusiasm for learning. He is especially anxious to learn to read as soon as possible. If his initial reading experiences are associated with failure, a negative feeling soon develops and the enthusiasm begins to fade. Failure becomes a habit---an accepted habit.

In order to rekindle the desire to succeed, the teacher must first break the failure habit. She must put success within easy reach of the learner. In fact, she must create situations in which it is virtually impossible to fail.

Reluctant readers have no backlog of successes, but rather a backlog of failures. By providing many opportunities for success, the discouraged reader will be better able to deal with an occasional failure. According to Combs:

...The best guarantee we have that a person will be able to deal with the future effectively is that he has been essentially successful in the past. People learn that they are able, not from failure, but from success.³

³. Ibid., p. 53.

Needless to say, reluctant readers have no goals. Often they have been subjected to repetitive work to the point where they are sure that they are going nowhere. Since it would be difficult for a discouraged child to set realistic goals for himself, these should be provided by the teacher.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of a deliberately positive approach to the teaching of reading, on the reading achievement of reluctant readers. The following method was used:

In a small-group plan, reading was taught through a positive approach incorporating the four success characteristics.

This approach involved:

- (a) The systematic development of positive self-concepts
- (b) The creation of a desire to succeed
- (c) The provision of a backlog of successes
- (d) The provision of teacher-set goals

In order to accomplish the major purpose of the study, the following secondary objectives were considered:

- (a) An investigation of the value of biblio-

therapy in the teaching of a positive self-concept

- (b) Consideration of praise and reward as a means of creating a desire for success
- (c) Consideration of individual interests as a means of motivation
- (d) Consideration of complete self-selection of library materials regardless of level of difficulty as a means of promoting interest in library books
- (e) Consideration of frequent teacher-read stories as a means of developing better listening skills
- (f) Consideration of the use of the tape recorder as a means of self-evaluation in oral reading

Definition and Delineation of the Problem

The study involved the following steps:

- (1) Selection of a group of Reluctant Readers on the basis of negative attitudes toward reading and histories of reading failures
- (2) Administering of individual reading achievement tests
- (3) Formulating of individual reading expectancies through use of the Bond Formula
- (4) Administering individual diagnostic reading tests
- (5) Administering projective and direct sentence com-

pletion tests to determine personality factors

- (6) Teaching reading during a five month period according to the positive approach to be described in detail in Chapter III
- (7) Re-testing at the end of the five month period in order to determine gains in reading achievement and changes in self-concepts
- (8) Analyzing the obtained data as follows:
 - (a) Comparing results of achievement tests, before and after the study
 - (b) Comparing the new achievement scores with the levels of expectancy
 - (c) Comparing the results of diagnostic tests before and after the study
 - (d) Comparing the results of the projective and direct sentence completion tests

Definition of Terms

BIBLIOTHERAPY

The use of books to provide the child with specific experiences he lacks to satisfy basic psychological needs⁴

⁴•Mary Jean Kluwe, Self Image and First Grade Pupil, Ginn and Company Contributions to Reading, Number 33, 1964.

BOND FORMULA

A formula used for determining the level of expectancy of a child's reading achievement $(I.Q. \text{ times years in school plus } 1.0)^5$

DIRECT SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST

A personality test in which a person responds to an incomplete first person sentence such as: My favorite subject is _____.

GUIDED READING

A technique used in the teaching of reading by which the teacher literally guides pupils through difficult passages

LEVEL OF EXPECTANCY

The grade level at which a child can be expected to achieve according to his I.Q. and his years in school

MOTIVATION

That which energizes the organism, gives direction to

⁵. Guy Bond and Miles Tinker, Reading Difficulties, Their Diagnosis and Correction, Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., p.77.

activity, and selects the goals deemed valuable⁶

PROJECTIVE SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST

A personality test in which a person responds to an incomplete third person sentence such as: Jack's favorite teacher is _____.

(A tendency to identify with that person has been noted.)

RELUCTANT READER

For the purpose of this study, a reluctant reader can be defined as a child whose attitude toward reading is negative.

SELF-CONCEPT

...the central aspect of personality, consisting of a number of organized, defined objects, or ideas, each with a corresponding attitude indicating its adequacy in the eyes

⁶ Howard L. Kingsley and Ralph Garry, The Nature and Conditions of Learning, Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1959, p.206.

of the person who is literally looking at himself and judging himself.⁷

SELF-CONCEPT (Negative)

A negative view of one's self

SELF-CONCEPT (Positive)

A positive view of one's self

⁷·Ted Landsman, "The Role of the Self-Concept in Learning Situations", The High School Journal, Volume 45, April, 1962, p.49.

CHAPTER II

RELATED RESEARCH

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Research was reviewed in the following areas related to this study:

- (1) Personality patterns common to successful readers
- (2) The self-concept as is related to learning
- (3) Motivation
 - (a) To learning in general
 - (b) To the teaching of reading
- (4) Goal setting

Personality Patterns

Is there a personality pattern common to successful readers? Keshian¹ sought the answer to this pertinent question in a study involving seventy-two fifth graders selected randomly from over four hundred successful readers. Besides individual case studies and questionnaires, parent interviews were also used. The Stanford Reading Test, the Iowa Silent Reading Test, the Aspects of Personality and California Test of Personality were administered to each student.

In an analysis of results, no single factor seemed to

¹J.G. Keshian, "Is There a Personality Pattern Common to Successful Readers," Elementary English, XXXIX (March, 1962), pp.229-30.

appear to influence reading success, but rather a combination of factors, the most significant of which was an integrated personality. The range of personality patterns was wide, but a positive normal behavior was characteristic of almost every child.

The Self-Concept as is Related to Learning

Although many studies have been done showing the relationship between parents' perceptions and children's self-concepts, few have been reported concerning the teacher's relationship to the child's self-concept. Findings of most studies, however, have implications for education.

In one of several studies by Helper², an attempt was made to apply S-R learning theory to the learning of self-concept. He found a relationship between a child's identification with a parent and parental reward. Helper also found a low relationship between ratings by parents of eighth and ninth graders and self-reports.

In a study involving college students, Miyamoto and Dornbusch³ found a high relationship between a person's stated perception of self and his perception of what other

². Malcolm M. Helper, "Parental Evaluations of Children and Children's Self-Evaluations," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, March, 1958, pp.190-94.

³.S. Frank Miyamoto and Sanford M. Dornbusch, "A Test of Inter-actionist Hypothesis of Self-Conception," American Journal of Sociology, March, 1956, pp.399-403.

people think of him.

Using special play materials, Walsh⁴ investigated the difference in handling of these materials between low-achieving and adequately-achieving bright boys. In what appears to be an unscientific procedure, self-concepts were inferred from behavior. She reported that low achievers viewed themselves as being unable to express emotion and had feelings of inadequacy and rejection.

Zuk⁵ in a more complicated study, lends support to the findings of Walsh. Using projective instruments and observation of actual behavior of sixth graders, he found that behavior was governed not only by tendencies to perceive life in certain ways, but also by the interaction of situations and self. In accordance with Walsh, he feels that:

Self-theory proposes that feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, self-rejection, and the like would lower motivations, level of aspiration, and actual performance.⁶

Experimenting with matched fourth grades, Staines⁷

⁴Ann M. Walsh, "Self-Concepts of Bright Boys With Learning Difficulties," Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York, 1956, p.79.

⁵Gerald H. Zuk, "The Influence of Social Context on Impulse and Control Tendencies in Pre-adolescents," Genetic Psychology Monographs, LIV (November, 1956), pp.117-166.

⁶Ibid., p.118.

⁷J.W. Staines, "Self-Picture as a Factor in the Classroom," Journal of Educational Psychology, XXVIII (June, 1958), pp. 97-111.

had one teacher instruct in the usual way, while the other, although teaching the same subject matter, attempted to help the children build self-concepts. After a year, the two groups were tested. Although there was little difference academically, the latter class scored significantly higher in mental health.

In his critical review of the literature concerning perception, Jenkin⁸ reported that the major problem is the ambiguity of the definitions of perception. He also noted the discrepancy between self-concepts and self-reports as tending to reduce the meaningfulness of some of the research since self-reports in some form are used by most researchers. Another of the limitations is that much of the research has been done only at the college level.

Motivation

Studies in motivation, the combination of events which serve to activate the child and regulate his behavior in connection with goals⁹, are plentiful, but controversial.

One of the early experiments in motivation in 1925 by

⁸. Noel Jenkin, "Affective Processes in Perception," Psychological Bulletin, LIV, (March, 1957), pp. 100-127.

⁹. Howard L. Kingsley and Ralph Garry, The Nature and Conditions of Learning (Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:1954.)p.191.

Hurlock¹⁰ concerned the influence of praise and blame, reward and punishment, success and failure upon school work.

Using four matched groups of fourth and sixth graders selected on the basis of intelligence tests and arithmetic skill, fifteen minutes daily was devoted to addition practice for five consecutive days. The control group received separate tests without any comments as to performance. The other three groups were tested together, but the incentive conditions were varied. One group received much praise and encouragement besides being called by name. The reprovved group was continually criticized for poor work and mistakes. Although the fourth group was ignored in terms of recognition, they could hear what was said to the other two groups. Gains were made in the following order: praise group, reprovved group, ignored group, control group.

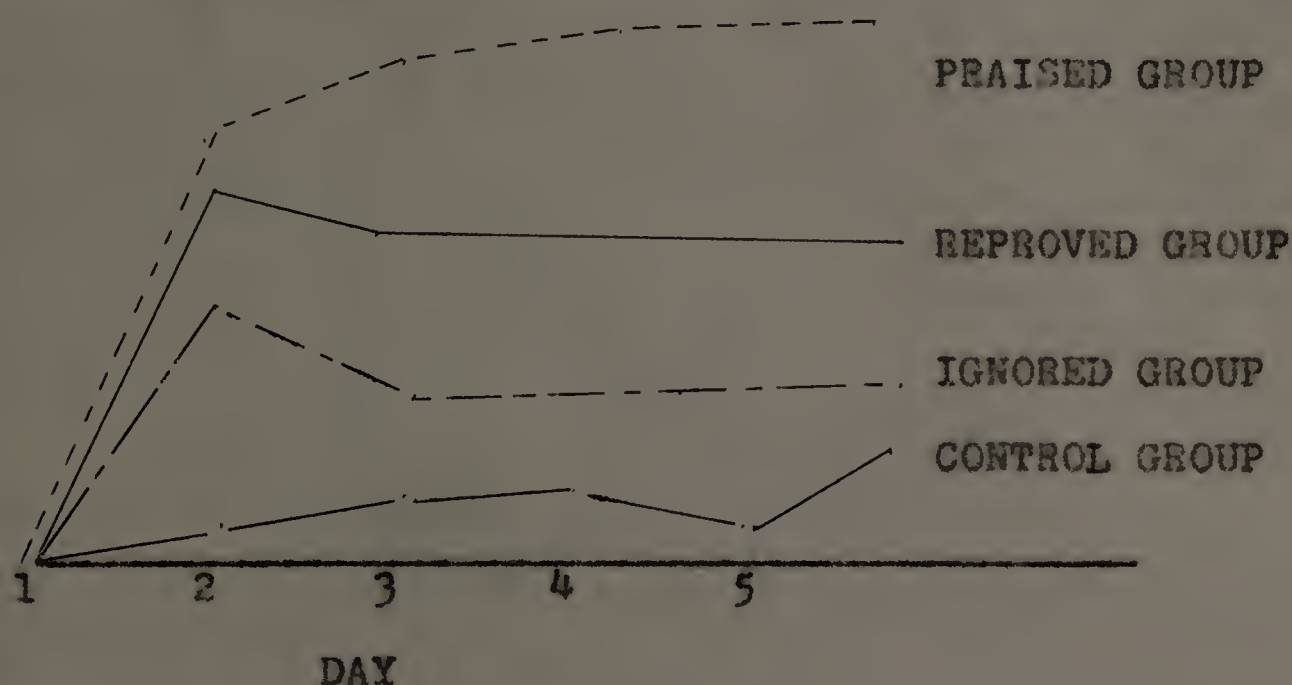
Other interesting outcomes of the same study were the individual differences. Girls were observed to have made greater gains than boys in the praised group, while the opposite was true in the reprovved group. Superior pupils were found to be most affected by reproof.

10. Elizabeth Hurlock, "An Evaluation of Certain Incentives Used in School Work," Journal of Educational Psychology, XVI (1925), pp. 145-59.

Results of the study can be seen in the following diagram.

TABLE 1

GAINS MADE IN ADDITION BY 4th AND 6th GRADE PUPILS
UNDER DIFFERENT INCENTIVE CONDITIONS (Hurlock, 1925)¹¹



Bruner¹² in a later study, argued against the heavy reliance of pupils on teacher approval, because of a tendency to develop conforming and rote behavior and to hinder independent motivation.

11. Ibid., p.157.

12. Jerome S. Bruner, "The Act of Discovery," Harvard Educational Review, XXXI (Winter, 1961), pp.21-32.

In his studies at McGill University, Hebb¹³ revealed that people placed in environments with limited stimuli can only endure that situation for short periods. When the range of stimuli is restricted, people become accustomed to it, and lose their capacity to maintain the organization on which alert learning behavior depends. This infers that humans need a continuous flow of stimuli in order to learn.

It would seem that teachers then, should provide this flow of stimuli. However, the assumption that a little motivation is good, therefore a lot must be better, should not be made.

In another study by Bruner¹⁴, reason is given to doubt the above assumption. By placing animals in a discrimination apparatus for the purpose of determining the range of cues to which the animals responded, the following relationship was found to be true:

...the more pressing the requirement that an organism reach a goal rapidly, the more hindering will be a set for considering many alternative cues. Thus, to speed up goal

13.

D.O. Hebb, "The Motivating Effects of Exteroceptive Stimulation," American Psychologist, 1958, p.13.

14.

Jerome S. Bruner, Jean Matter, and Miriam Papanek, "Breadth of Learning as a Function of Drive Level and Mechanization," Psychological Review, 1955, p.62.

attainment, and organism sacrifices breadth of attention and consequently breadth of learning.¹⁵

According to McClelland¹⁶, motivational arousal takes place when a discrepancy exists between the presented stimuli and the existing stimuli. When a large discrepancy exists, the learner becomes displeased and tends to avoid the situation. Small discrepancies would seem to be more effective. The following implication can be drawn for teaching. Novelty in learning situations is effective only to a certain point. That point must be determined by the teacher.

In motivation studies dealing directly with reading, Adams¹⁷ found that the individualized reading approach was especially valuable in developing positive attitudes toward reading and high interest even among children making slow progress.

15. Ibid., p.62.

16. D.C. McClelland and E.I. Lowell, The Achievement Motive, Appleton-Century Crofts, 1953.

17. Phyllis S. Adams, "An Investigation of an Individualized Reading Program and a Modified Basal Reading Program in First Grade," (Unpublished dissertation, University of Denver, 1962), quoted in Dissertation Abstracts, XXIII, p.945.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is generally referred to by psychologists as the L.A., the level of aspiration. In many studies, the relationship between the L.A. and generalized motives to achieve can be noted.

Davids and White¹⁸, in their 1958 study found that disturbed children's goal setting after failure was affected not only by the nature of the task, but also by the threat of loss of self-esteem and threat of loss of the experimenter's admiration. The L.A.'s either dropped considerably, or increased toward extremely unrealistic goals.

Children with negative self-concepts or whose self-concepts were uncertain were found to over-estimate their goals, or to set them very low and blame themselves for failure. This study was done by Steiner.¹⁹

In a study of successful pupils by Worrell²⁰, the

18.

Anthony Davids and Augustus White, "Effects of Success and Failure and Social Facilitations on Level of Aspiration in Emotionally Disturbed and Normal Children," Journal of Personality, XXVI (March, 1958), pp.77-93.

19.

Ivan D. Steiner, "Self-Perception and Goal-Setting Behavior," Journal of Personality, XXV (March, 1957), pp.344-55.

20.

L. Worrell, "Level of Aspiration and Academic Success," Journal of Educational Psychology, L (April, 1959), pp.47-54.

tendency was evident toward holding the L.A. close to previous performance.

Important implications for teaching can be found in Rosenfeld and Zander's²¹ 1961 study in which they showed that although disapproval of inadequate performance did not affect aspiration level, when the pupil thought he had done his best, the L.A. was negatively affected.

Related Literature

More research is needed according to Homze²² in the effects of reading on the individual. Teachers tend to place more emphasis on the methodology than on the product.

The most important factor in the development of the self-concept is the child's ability to identify with others. In relating the implications for education, Homze quotes a doctoral study by Perkins:

Specifically, the self-concept can be used in education: (a) as a psychological construct which enables teachers, counselors, parents,

21.

Howard M. Rosenfeld and Alvin Zander, "The Influence of Teachers on Aspirations of Students," Journal of Educational Psychology, LV (February, 1961), pp.1-11.

22.

Alma Cross Homze, "The Self-Concept and Reading," Elementary English, XXXIX (March, 1962), pp.210-15.

and others to achieve with training, deeper understandings and insights into the behavior and development of children, and (b) as a vital and important aspect of learning and development which the school through its educational processes seeks to promote and foster in each child.²³

Honze hypothesizes that reading failure and negative self-concepts are related.

Although a study by Osborn²⁴ was of interest, his discussion of its side effects was more pertinent. In viewing the motivation of high school students toward certain subjects, one out of every seven students reported his reasons for motivation in terms of success or failure experiences; that is, highly motivated students related this to success experiences.

As one tenth grader so aptly commented:

"It feels good to succeed'."

Summary of Related Research

In research concerning successful readers, a positive normal behavior seems to be characteristic.

Few studies have been done involving the self-concept as it relates directly to reading achievement. However, it

23. Ibid., p.212.

24. D. Keith Osborn, "It Feels Good to Succeed," Grade Teacher, February, 1963, pp.138-39.

can be noted that a discrepancy exists between self-concept and self-report. Also evident is a correlation between feelings of inadequacy and low performance level.

Studies in motivation indicate a positive correlation between praise and achievement. A need to increase the flow of stimuli in order to further motivate pupils is evident.

Unrealistic goal setting seems to result from failures and negative self-concepts.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Location and Duration of the Study

The writer was very fortunate in being able to conduct this study at the Mark's Meadow Laboratory School at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. The co-operation of classroom teachers, special teachers, and administrators was greatly appreciated.

The study took place during a five month period beginning in October of 1964 and ending in February of 1965.

Selection of Subjects

Subjects were selected by a qualified reading specialist in co-operation with the classroom teachers. Selection was based on the following factors:

- (1) Enrollment in Grade 2 or Grade 3
- (2) History of reading failures
- (3) Negative attitude toward reading

No attempt was made to match the subjects according to I.Q., sex, or age since the probability of finding such a matched group within the established limits was unlikely.

The final selection included eight children; six boys and two girls.

History of the Subjects

Since only eight children were selected, the writer has chosen to describe briefly the history of each.

Boy #1

Outward appearances belie the fact that this child has a history of reading failures. Blond and fair-complected, his blue eyes are lively and inquisitive.

However, in spite of an I.Q. of 104, his first year in school was characterized by one failure after another. His report card grades were all N's (Needs improvement), while the teacher comments stated: brief attention span, little effort, little progress.

Repeating Grade 1 did not seem to remedy the situation. In fact, it is highly probable that it served only to discourage further an already discouraged child. Again his report card showed all N's, while the teacher commented on his lack of self-confidence, his reading difficulties, his lack of interest, and his defeatist attitude. She also noted that he cried easily when scolded and that although he wanted to be liked by his peers, he did not know how to get along. Now Boy #1 was categorized as a discipline problem.

Boy #2

Boy #2 comes from a family of three children, he being the only boy. His father is a farmer.

Outwardly this child personifies neglect. His clothing and general appearance present an unkempt and uncared for look.

His I.Q. of 105 does not correspond with his school achievement. Grade 1 reports show all N's (Needs improvement). An interesting teacher comment states: "This boy needs to be shown that he can be successful."

Mention is made throughout his history of poor eyesight. At one point, however, a school nurse has noted that his eye problems are 'self-inflicted' and indicate a desire for attention at any cost.

Again repetition of Grade 1 did not seem to be the solution. Poor marks were again accompanied by adverse comments.

In Grade 2, discipline had become a problem. According to the teacher, "The child is sly, copies, cheats, and lies. He cries easily and he is nervous and rude.

Note was made of a comment made by his mother at a parent-teacher conference. According to her, the child's father often calls the child 'dumb' causing him to feel increasing inadequate.

Boy #3

The picture of cleanliness, this boy was a disappointment to his dad who wanted a rough and tumble youngster. His younger brother, however, satisfies his father's requirements.

Early in Grade 1, Boy #3's teacher reported that his progress was good in all subjects, but later in the year it was noted that he needed to reinforce his reading skills. From this point on, reading was his weakness in spite of a very high I.Q. (121).

Grade 2 reports also note his reading weakness.

This boy's mother has taken a great deal of interest in the problems and progress of her child.

Boy #4

One of five boys, this child's father is a farmer.

According to teacher comments, Boy #4's entire school life can best be summarized as hard work, but failure. His Grade 1 reports show only N's (Needs improvement).

His mother has had a tendency to push him beyond his capabilities and showed resentment at his Grade 1 retention.

Although some progress was made during his second year at the Grade 1 level, the teacher noted his 'need for praise for things well done.'

Grade 2 resulted in more failures and more below grade level work.

Boy #5

A very low I.Q. (77) has been a contributing factor in the history of failures for this child. Perhaps another noteworthy factor is that he is one of ten children.

First grade reports consisted of all N's (Needs improvement). Teachers comments noted his bad behavior and need for constant praise. Physical punishment by other members of his family was noted as a hindrance to progress.

A second year at the Grade 1 level was considered necessary. The results again were questionable with an increase in his tendency to lose his temper. Love of approval was again noted.

Grade 2 was but a continuation of past defeats. All N's constituted his report card while interestingly, the teacher again noted 'Works best when praised and encouraged'.

Boy #6

Perhaps the most important factor in the history of Boy #6 is that his twin sister was promoted at the end of Grade 1 while he was not.

All of his records refer to his small physical size and his immaturity. He did not begin to read until the end of Grade 1 at which time the teacher noted that he lacked comprehension. The familiar comment, 'Needs praise' accompanied his Grade 1 records.

The value of his Grade 1 repetition seems questionable indeed on the basis of his records. Discipline became a serious problem at school as well as at home.

His Grade 2 performance shows some progress, but discipline continued to be a major problem. Psychiatric aid was sought by the parents.

End of the year comments by the teacher included, 'When he is praised, he works harder'.

Girl #1

Girl #1 comes from a family of seven children, some of whom are retarded. Her own I.Q. is 82.

Although quite an attractive child, she is often unkempt.

Adjusting to school was a problem in Grade 1. Poor marks were prevalent throughout. Repetition of Grade 1 was characterized by little progress in any subject. Her teacher noted that she apparently does not understand accepted behavior.

Never have this girl's parents attended a parent-teacher conference.

Girl #2

One of four girls in a family of five children, this child is not only attractive in appearance, but she is also extremely polite and co-operative.

Although her I.Q. is 109, her reading difficulties began in Grade 1. Teacher comments consistently recognize her sweetness, but also make note of her need for reassurance, praise and extra love.

Her parents have taken much interest in her problem, and they have had the child tutored.

Selection of Tests

The selection of achievement and diagnostic tests was made by a qualified reading specialist.

The Durrell-Sullivan Achievement Tests, Form A, were administered at the onset of the program, while parallel Form B was administered at the end of the study.

The Durrell-Sullivan Reading Analysis Test was also administered before and after the study.

A simple projective sentence completion test constructed by the investigator was used early in the program as was a direct sentence completion test.

The Durrell Interest Inventory was selected on the basis of its complete coverage of interest areas.

Selection of Materials

In order to avoid association with past failures, the investigator chose to use a basal text other than those with which the subjects were familiar. The Alice and Jerry Basic Reading Program (Row, Peterson) was selected.

Supplementary material included basic readers of Scott-Foresmann, Houghton-Mifflin, and Ginn. Library books, magazines, and original stories were also used.

Methods Used in the Development of Positive Self-Concepts

Bibliotherapy, or the use of books to provide the child with specific experiences he lacks to satisfy basic psychological needs,¹ was one of the techniques used in the attempt to develop positive self-concepts. A series of original stories entitled the "I Can Do It" series, was the basis for this plan. During the first class period of each week, one of these stories was told. The early stories dealt with the problems of animated animals. Eventually the animal characters were replaced by children whose problems very closely paralleled the specific problems of the subjects. All of the stories have one common element: the problem of the main character is finally solved when he discovers the magic in the words "I can do it." Paper replicas of the main characters of each story were made by the subjects to take home as a reminder of these magic words.

1.

Mary Jean Kluwe, Self Image and First Grade Pupil, Ginn and Company Contributions to Reading, Number 33, 1964.

A larger replica was prominently displayed at all times within the classroom. In the event of a child's verbalization of the words "I can't do it", he was reminded by the investigator of the character for the week.

Verbal praise and simple rewards such as paper stars were used frequently.

Methods Used in Creating a Desire for Success

The Durrell Interest Inventory was administered to determine the specific interests of each child. This information was supplemented with interests noted by the investigator in class discussions. Original stories of a few paragraphs in length were written using the child's own name. Copies of each story were distributed periodically to each child and read orally. A short comprehension exercise accompanied each.

Again praise and simple rewards played an important role in creating a desire for success.

Methods Used in Providing a Backlog of Successes

In order to break the failure habit, many opportunities for success were provided. The guided reading technique was used frequently since through its use, success is more readily achieved.

Workbook assignments were previewed thoroughly before the children actually did them. If at any time a child made an error on an item, a small dot was placed next to that

item by the investigator. The child was then allowed to make the correction. While 100% was marked on pages needing no corrections, the symbol *C* was marked on corrected pages. The symbol *X* was never used, nor were negative comments made.

Other written activities were provided by the instructor to correlate with the assigned stories. These were so designed as to insure success. However, success was always authentic.

All directions, both written and oral, were given in positive terms.

Competition was completely eliminated since the investigator did not wish to risk influencing attitudes of the losers through inevitable failures.

Methods Used in Providing Goals

Since, as has already been noted, it would be difficult for a child at this level to set realistic goals for himself, they were provided by the instructor. Early in the study, these goals were related orally. For example: "Today we are going to see if we can all hear the sound of the letter 'b' at the beginning of a word. Before the lesson is over, we'll each think of three words that start with the letter 'b'."

Goals were later referred to as 'goals' and were written by the investigator for each individual daily. Each child found his list of goals at his place when he entered the classroom. Each then knew exactly what he was to accomplish during the reading period. Goals were always easily attainable.

Upon completion of his goals for the day, the child was given one-fifth of a paper animal. On Friday, upon the completion of his goals, he received the final portion of the animal for the week. These were pasted on a large construction paper and later made into a booklet.

Perhaps the most important factor in the methods was the complete absence of negativism in directions or comments. Every subject experienced only success during each day's reading session.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Since this study was action research, and since the investigator wishes the results to be of value to classroom teachers, the analysis of results will be of an informal rather than highly statistical nature.

The following comparisons will be made:

- (1) Comparison of results of pre-test and post-test scores according to the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests
- (2) Comparison of results of 1964 and 1965 Metropolitan Reading Achievement scores
- (3) Comparison of results of Durrell Reading Analysis Tests
- (4) Comparison of results of direct and projective sentence completion tests

Comparison of Results of Reading Achievement Tests Before and After the Study

Since the number of subjects was few, the results of the pre-tests and post-tests (Forms A and B of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Tests) will be shown individually.

Although the Metropolitan Achievement Test was not an

integral part of this study, it was administered within the regular classroom soon after the conclusion of the study. For that reason, the investigator has chosen to show the comparison between the 1964 and 1965 reading achievement scores.

TABLE 2

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY#1

GRADE LEVEL	
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	1.4
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	1.9

Boy #1 scored 1.4 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while he scored 1.9 on Form B. His gain in reading achievement was five months.

TABLE 3

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #1

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	1.2
1965	1.3

Boy #1 scored 1.2 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement test in 1964 while he scored 1.3 in 1965. His gain was one month.

TABLE 4

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #2

	GRADE LEVEL
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	2.3
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	3.7

Boy #2 scored 2.3 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while he scored 3.7 on Form B. His gain in reading achievement was one year and four months.

TABLE 5

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #2

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	1.9
1965	3.2

Boy #2 scored 1.9 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test in 1964 while he scored 3.2 in 1965. His gain was one year and three months.

TABLE 6

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #3

	GRADE LEVEL
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	2.9
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	3.4

Boy #3 scored 2.9 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while he scored 3.4 on Form B. His gain in reading achievement was five months.

TABLE 7

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #3

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	2.1
1965	3.2

Boy #3 scored 2.1 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test in 1964 while he scored 3.2 in 1965. His gain was one year and one month.

TABLE 8

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #4

	GRADE LEVEL
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	3.0
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	3.5

Boy #4 scored 3.0 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while he scored 3.5 on Form B. His gain in reading achievement was five months.

TABLE 9

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #4

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	2.4
1965	3.1

Boy #4 scored 2.4 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test in 1964 while he scored 3.1 in 1965. His gain in reading achievement was seven months.

TABLE 10

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #5

	GRADE LEVEL
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	2.5
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	2.9

Boy #5 scored 2.5 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while he scored 2.9 on Form B. His gain in reading achievement was four months.

TABLE 11

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #5

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	1.8
1965	2.4

Boy #5 scored 1.8 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test in 1964 while he scored 2.4 in 1965. His gain was six months.

TABLE 12

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #6

	GRADE LEVEL
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	2.9
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	3.4

Boy #6 scored 2.9 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while he scored 3.4 on Form B. His gain in reading achievement was five months.

TABLE 13

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR BOY #6

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	1.9
1965	2.5

Boy #6 scored 1.9 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test in 1964 while he scored 2.5 in 1965. His gain was six months.

TABLE 14

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR GIRL #1

	GRADE LEVEL
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	1.5
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	1.8

Girl #1 scored 1.5 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while she scored 1.8 on Form B. Her gain in reading achievement was three months.

TABLE 15

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR GIRL #1

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	1.3
1965	1.5

Girl #1 scored 1.3 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test in 1964 while she scored 1.5 in 1965. Her gain was two months.

TABLE 16

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DURRELL-SULLIVAN READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR GIRL #2

	GRADE LEVEL
PRE-TEST SCORE (FORM A)	2.4
POST-TEST SCORE (FORM B)	2.8

Girl #2 scored 2.4 on Form A of the Durrell-Sullivan Reading Achievement Test while she scored 2.8 on Form B. Her gain in reading achievement was four months.

TABLE 17

GAINS IN READING ACHIEVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TESTS FOR GIRL #2

YEAR	GRADE LEVEL
1964	1.9
1965	3.2

Girl #2 scored 1.9 on the Metropolitan Reading Achievement Test in 1964 while she scored 3.2 in 1965. Her gain was one year and three months.

Comparison of Diagnostic Pre-tests and Diagnostic Post-tests

The Durrell Analysis Tests were administered at the onset of the study. At that time, the reading specialist who administered the tests reported that not one of the subjects could function beyond the first selection making it impossible for him to score them accurately.

When parallel tests were administered at the end of the study, the results were as follows:

Boy #1-----High first grade to low second grade
Boy #2-----Low third grade
Boy #3-----Low third grade
Boy #4-----Low second grade
Boy #5-----Low third grade
Girl #1-----Low first grade
Girl #2-----Mid second grade

Comparison of the Results of Direct and Projective Sentence Completion Tests

The direct and projective sentence completion tests were administered in order to give clearer personality pictures of the subjects. It was not the intention of the investigator to make psychological interpretations of the results. Therefore, the analysis will be of a general rather than specific nature.

Strong similarities between the projective results and the direct results were evident throughout.

Results showed that the subjects not only had negative attitudes toward reading, but seemed to have the same attitude toward other activities associated with school.

Several of the subjects expressed fear of teacher scoldings as a result of failures, while the reaction to poor work ranged from upset stomachs to tears.

Only one of the subjects expressed happiness in reference to school.

Changes in Self-Concepts

As was indicated in an earlier chapter, the difficulty in measuring the self-concept through testing presents presents a problem in describing changes. For this reason, much of the following information was gathered through observation.

Results of Bibliotherapy

Upon entering the reading group, each of the subjects could be described as being easily discouraged and lacking confidence. Very often during the early part of the study, the investigator found it necessary to remind the children of the character for the week. Gradually, however, it was noted that the need for this reminder subsided. Almost never did anyone say that he or she could not do the task

at hand. If a boy or girl inadvertently said, "I can't do it", the remainder of the group was quick to say, "Remember Stretch!", their favorite 'I can do it' character.

Early in the study, several of the subjects agreed that the main characters in the "I can do it" stories were not real. However, their enthusiasm for the stories was obvious. As the series progressed, they expressed doubt as to their initial judgment of the characters. On one occasion, Boy #4 entered the reading room and announced excitedly that he had tried the magic words "I can do it" in order to finish a difficult arithmetic assignment during the time allotted by his classroom teacher. "They really work!", was his happy exclamation. Others within the group soon told of their own experiences with the magic words.

The enthusiasm with which the children continually attacked new work seemed to the investigator to be evidence of the gradual emergence of new self-concepts.

Changes in Attitudes Toward Reading

Since one of the pre-requisites for admission into the reluctant reader group was a negative attitude toward reading, all eight of the subjects showed signs of a strong dislike for all aspects of reading. This could be easily observed in the belligerent attitudes toward the instructor,

lack of interest in books, and negative comments. Probably the most common comment early in the study was, "I hate reading!"

As the study progressed, however, such negative comments were replaced by such comments as, "I wish we could read all day!"

The enthusiasm with which the subjects entered the reading room was also indicative of a change in attitude. While early in the study they tended to procrastinate before entering the room, their actions later left little doubt as to the enthusiasm which they felt. Classroom teachers commented to the investigator on many occasions concerning the changing attitudes of the subjects toward all phases of reading.

The investigator feels that the change in attitude can be attributed to a combination of factors, probably the most important of which is successful experience.

Other Observable Changes

(1) Discipline

As can be verified in the history of each child, many of the subjects had at one time or another been considered discipline problems. The gradual relief or improvement of this situation was noted by the investigator as well as the regular classroom teachers.

(2) Compatibility Within the Group

The dislike which most of these children felt for one another in October was obvious and easily observable. Name calling was frequent as was kicking, hitting, and other means of conveying their feelings.

By December, evidences of teamwork became noticeable. Frequently a child would volunteer to help one of his classmates by checking sight vocabulary or assisting with other work. There seemed to be a united effort for success.

The tendency to tattle on one another also subsided as did the cause for the tattling.

An incident of note was the sight of two boys, unable to get along at the beginning of the study, sitting contentedly side by side holding hands while the investigator read aloud to them.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER V

RESTATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of a deliberately positive approach to the teaching of reading on the reading achievement of reluctant readers.

The positive approach was formulated on the investigator's belief that successful students:

- (1) Have positive self-concepts; that is, they believe in themselves and their own capabilities
- (2) Have strong desires to succeed
- (3) Have healthy backlogs of successes to sustain them through inevitable failures
- (4) Know where they are going; they are more likely to have goals

The positive approach consisted of:

- (1) The systematic development of positive self-concepts
- (2) The creation of a desire to succeed
- (3) The provision of a backlog of successes
- (4) The provision of teacher-set goals

Conclusions

Since this study was action research, the writer wishes to note the following limitations before drawing conclusions.

- (1) The number of subjects was limited.
- (2) The investigator did the actual teaching of the program.

With these limitations clearly in mind, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- (1) Gains in reading achievement are positively related to the positive approach.
- (2) Positive attitudes toward the reading process can be developed through successful experience.
- (3) Self-concepts can be strengthened through a combination of bibliotherapy, successful experience, and praise.
- (4) Disciplinary problems can be relieved through successful reading experiences.
- (5) Interest in reading can be strengthened through individualized stories about a child using his own name.
- (6) Simple material rewards are an effective means of motivation.
- (7) Interest in reading can be strengthened through the use of self-selected materials.
- (8) Provision of individualized written goals is an effective means of motivation.
- (9) Rapport between teacher and pupil can be strengthened through the positive approach.

- (10) The desire to succeed can be developed through praise and simple rewards.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Are the effects of the positive approach temporary or long lasting? A longitudinal study of children who have been taught through the positive approach and then returned to the regular classroom and the conventional method of teaching reading would help to provide the answer to this question.

2. A longitudinal study of children who have been subjected to the positive approach to the exclusion of all others would give further evidence as to its true value.

3. A study in which Grade 1 children were given their initial reading experiences using the described positive approach would help to answer the question concerning the effects of early associations with reading failures.

4. A study could be done in which the effects of the positive approach with a large group rather than a small group could be determined.

5. Studies could be done using the positive approach in other subject areas such as arithmetic and spelling providing valuable information to the classroom teacher.

APPENDIX

Durrell Interest Inventory

It is suggested that the interest inventory serve as the basis for a conversation with the child. Questions may be asked in relation to any area in which the child shows some interest.

1. Hunting, fishing, camping, sailing, canoeing, hiking, scouting.
2. Horses, cows, sheep, chickens, dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, etc.
3. Flowers, gardens, trees, wildflowers, stars, weather, rocks, rivers.
4. Automobiles, airplanes, radio, television, wireless, railroads, bridges, construction.
5. Carpentry, electricity, chemistry, photography, printing, signaling.
6. Drawing, painting, carving, modeling, basketry, metal-work, etc.
7. Music, orchestra, piano, violin, dancing, dramatics, debating, speaking.
8. Reading, poetry, plays, stories, mythology, Bible, biography, adventure.
9. Collecting: stamps, stones, shells, bugs, flowers, coins, and other collections.

10. Cooking, candy making, fancywork, sewing, weaving, interior decorating.
11. Card games, puzzles, checkers, chess, indoor games.
12. Football, baseball, basketball, hockey, boxing, wrestling, etc.
13. Swimming, skating, riding, tennis, golf, archery, rifle, skiing, acrobatics, bowling.
14. History, geography, science, arithmetic, languages.
15. What clubs do you belong to? What do you intend to do for a living?

Projective Sentence Completion Test

1. When Jack is in school, he likes to _____.
2. When the teacher scolds Tommy, he _____.
3. John is not happy when _____.
4. Sally _____ when she makes a mistake.
5. Jim thinks school is _____.
6. Dick wishes that his teacher would _____.
7. Betty thinks that reading is _____.
8. When Billy does poor work, he _____.
9. Sam's favorite school work is _____.
10. When Jerry goes to school he feels _____.
11. When the work is hard, Bobby _____.
12. In his spare time, Johnny likes to _____.

Parallel Direct Sentence Completion Test

1. When I am in school, I like to _____.
2. When the teacher scolds me, I _____.
3. I am not happy when _____.
4. I _____ when I make mistakes.
5. I think school is _____.
6. I wish that my teacher would _____.
7. I think that reading is _____.
8. When I do poor work I _____.
9. My favorite school work is _____.
10. When I go to school I feel _____.
11. When the work is hard, I _____.
12. In my spare time I like to _____.

Sample Daily Schedule
(General)

TIME	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3
9:00-9:15	Experience chart with all groups together. Instructor prints sentences on chart as children dictate. Subjects vary. Children read the completed chart orally and illustrate if time permits.		
9:15-9:30	Read story in basal reader. Instructor uses guided reading technique.	Independent reading. Children use library books or supplementary series.	Flashcards and/or vocabulary games.
9:30-9:45	Independent reading.	Flashcards and/or vocabulary games.	Guided reading.
9:45-10:00	Flashcards and/or vocabulary games.	Guided reading.	Independent reading.
1:00-1:15	All groups together. Phonics games.		
1:15-1:30	Instructor reads to all groups. Children select story.		

Sample of Individualized Written Goals

Your goals for today.

1. Look over yesterday's new words. See if you can remember them.
 2. Choose any story that you would like to read in your extra book. Read it to yourself.
 3. Make a picture about your story.
 4. Make two pictures of things that start with these blends: fl sh tr ch
 5. You have reached your goals for today! Now you may look at library books or play a word game.
-

These goals were individualized daily and were always easily attainable. The instructor explained them whenever necessary.

Reaching these goals did not constitute a complete lesson, but only the independent and review work, since much teacher involvement is usually essential in the presentation of new work.

Basic Reading Materials

The Alice and Jerry Basic Reading Program
Harper and Row Publishers, Evanston, Illinois; Elmsford,
New York; Pleasanton, California. 1957.

Readiness Materials

OVER THE WALL, Developmental Readiness Book
Picture Cards, (63 pictures, 6½ x 9 inches, for use with
Over the Wall)

Pre-Primer Program Materials

SKIP ALONG, First pre-primer
UNDER THE SKY, Second pre-primer
OPEN THE DOOR, Third pre-primer
Pictures for Skip Along, (24 pictures on 16-19 cards)
Pre-primer Workbooks

Primer Program Materials

DAY IN AND DAY OUT, Basic primer
Workbook to accompany Day In and Day Out
WISHING WELL, Parallel primer
MY OWN BOOK, Numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8

First Reader Materials

ROUND ABOUT, Basic first reader
Workbook to accompany Round About
ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN, Parallel first reader
MY OWN BOOK, Numbers 9, 10, 11, and 12

Supplementary Basic Series

Ginn Basic Reading Series

Pre-Primer I-----My Little Red Story Book
 Pre-Primer II-----My Little Green Story Book
 Pre-Primer III-----My Little Blue Story Book
 Primer-----The Little White House
 First-Reader-----On Cherry Street

Scott, Foresman Basic Reading Series

Pre-Primer I-----We Look and See
 Pre-Primer II-----We Work and Play
 Pre-Primer III-----We Come and Go
 Junior Primer-----Guess Who
 Primer-----Fun With Dick and Jane
 First-Reader-----Our New Friends
 Second-Reader (Part One)-----Friends and Neighbors
 Second-Reader (Part Two)-----More Friends and Neighbors

Houghton, Mifflin Basic Reading Series

Pre-Primer I-----Tip
 Pre-Primer II-----Tip and Mitten
 Pre-Primer III-----The Big Show
 First-Reader-----Jack and Janet
 Second-Reader (Part One)-----Come Along
 Second-Reader (Part Two)-----On We Go

Sample Individualized Story

Jennifer's New Shoes

New words: Jennifer, best, bought, shoes, dancing

One day Jennifer and her mother went to the shoe store. They looked at many shoes. They looked at red school shoes. They looked at brown play shoes. They looked at white dancing shoes. But Jennifer liked the black Sunday shoes best. Mother bought the black shoes for Jennifer. Jennifer was very happy!

Fill in the blanks.

One day Jennifer and her mother went to the _____.
They looked at many _____.
First they looked at _____ shoes.
Then they looked at _____ shoes.
Next they looked at _____ shoes.
Mother bought the _____ shoes for Jennifer.
Jennifer was very happy! Make Jennifer's new shoes.

Sample Individualized Stories

Tommie's New Puppy

New words: name, together

Tommie has a new puppy. He is very little. He is black with white spots. His eyes are big and brown.

Tommie's puppy likes to play ball. He likes to run and jump. Tommie and his puppy have fun together.

Can you help Tommie give his new little puppy a name?

Make Tommie and his puppy. Then give the puppy a name.

Mike Goes Hunting

New words: rifle, hunting, careful

Mike and his father like to hunt. Mike's father has a big gun. It is called a rifle.

They hunt for rabbits in the woods. They are very careful with the gun.

What do Mike and his father like to do?

What is Mike's father's gun called?

Why are Mike and his father careful?

TABLE 18

COMPARISON BETWEEN PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES AND LEVELS OF EXPECTANCY

	PRE-TEST SCORE	LEVEL OF EXPECTANCY (1)	POST-TEST SCORE	LEVEL OF EXPECTANCY (2)
Boy #1	1.4	3.0	1.9	3.6
Boy #2	2.3	4.1	3.7	4.6
Boy #3	2.9	3.4	3.4	4.0
Boy #4	3.0	3.7	3.5	4.1
Boy #5	2.5	3.3	2.9	3.6
Boy #6	2.9	3.8	3.4	4.3
Girl # 1	1.5	2.6	1.8	3.0
Girl # 2	2.4	3.1	2.8	3.7

Level of expectancy (1) denotes the level of expectancy at the beginning of the study, while level of expectancy (2) denotes the level of expectancy at the conclusion of the study.

Sample from the "I Can Do It" Series

Stretch

"Why are you crying, Son?" asked Mother Giraffe kindly. She could feel the hot moist tears sliding all the way down her long slender neck from the very spot where her young son was rubbing his tawny head.

"Oh, Mother," sobbed little Stretch, "all of my friends can reach the tastiest leaves on the top of the tallest trees, but I just can't reach. I've tried and tried, but I just can't do it ! "

"Nonsense ! " scolded Mother Giraffe gently. "You only think you can't ! "

"What a silly thing to say," thought little Stretch. "I know very well I can't reach. I've tried and tried."

"Now dry your eyes on my apron and forget about the leaves," continued Mother. "Run along and play until supper time."

So sad Stretch reached obediently for his mother's polka-dotted apron and dried his teary brown eyes. But he knew that he couldn't forget about those tasty leaves.

Hilda the Hippo was just waking up from her afternoon snooze when Stretch ambled by her mud-hole home. "Hi, there, Stretch," yawned Hilda lazily. "Why do you look so sad today?"

"Oh, nothing," fibbed Stretch. "I was just wondering, Hilda, what do you do when you want to do something that's very hard?"

"Oh, that's easy," confided Hilda happily. "I just close my eyes and count to ten slowly before I try anything. It always works for me."

"Thanks, Hilda," shouted Stretch, but she could hardly hear him for his lanky legs had carried him almost to the tall trees before the words were out of his mouth.

"I'll try counting to ten before I reach for those leaves," he thought, "but I suppose it won't work for me." And he was right. It didn't work. No matter how many times he counted to ten slowly, he still couldn't reach the tip-top leaves.

"Oh, dear," sighed Stretch to himself. "Someone must be able to help me find the answer." So off he went looking for more advice.

Louie Lion was lolling around in the sun smack in Stretch's path. "Louie knows everything," thought the long-legged little giraffe. "Surely he'll know what to do."

"Louie," he asked hopefully, "what do you do when you want to do something that's very hard?"

"That's easy," growled Louie. "I just give a great big roar first. That makes me feel big and strong. Then I can

do anything."

"Thanks, Louie," shouted Stretch, but all the way to the trees he told himself that it would never work. Again he was right. How could it possibly work when everyone knows that giraffes can just barely moo, never mind roar! His feeble little moo didn't make him feel big and strong at all. He only felt more and more certain that he'd never be able to reach those juicy leaves.

Poor discouraged Stretch was about to give up and go home when he heard some loud chattering in a near-by tree. Mickey Monkey was having a wonderful time swinging from branch to branch by his tail. Way to the top of the trees he sailed! "That's it!" shouted Stretch. "I have a tail. That must be the answer!" But it didn't take long for him to discover that a giraffe's tail is not meant for swinging! As he picked himself up from the hard ground, he knew for sure that he would never be able to reach the tree tops.

Mother had supper all ready when her discouraged little son arrived home. She must have sensed his feelings for she said softly, "My son, I want to tell you a secret. If you believe what I tell you, you will be able to reach those leaves and do many other things besides. Now listen carefully. Here's what you must do. You must say these magic

words over and over to yourself. 'I can do it. I can do it.' Then you must think about how nice it will be when you do reach the top of the trees. How surprised your friends will be and how good those leaves will taste! You must try very very hard, but the most important thing to remember is to say and believe the magic words."

Nothing else had worked, so little Stretch was more than willing to try his mother's secret. That night when he went to bed, he said the magic words over and over. He thought so hard about what it would be like to reach those juicy leaves that he could even taste them in his dreams.

When morning came, he kept right on saying the magic words all the way to the tall trees.

Now the time had come to test their magic. As he stood next to the very tallest tree, he repeated the words just once more. Then he pointed his nose toward the sky and stretched and stretched with all of his might. "I can do it! I can do it!" he was saying to himself. And do you know what? He DID!

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PROBLEM APPROVED BY:

(Problem Committee)

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